Daily Eagle

THE CRUMB BRUSH.

It was the crumb brush did all the harm. You know the white horse hair brush, with an ivory back and handle, the shape of a reaping hook or a Turkish saber, they use in middle-class houses when the servant, or sometimes the lady of the house or her daughter, goes round the table brushing the crumbs off the cloth after dinner before the dessert is set on the table.

Well, the brush was my ruin.

I had not the slightest intention of marrying. At 28, you understand? I had plenty of time to think about that. The head clerk in the office—a real good fellow, who used to forge my name on the presence sheet whenever I was late—had often told me so.

"If I were you I should not marry at all. I do not say that because I have been separated from my wife these last ten years, or because I have had three lawsuits to disown her three last children. But, if I were you, I should not marry."

And I had already found in La Rochefoucauld a thought, which even in those days I instinctively admired, but of which I understood the full depth now: "There are good marriages; but there are none that are entirely delightful."

Besides I was perfectly happy, and I had arranged my bachelor existence to my entire satisfaction.

I was then—as I am now—a clerk in one of the public offices. Five hundred and forty dollars a year and a Christmas box is not so bad when one is 28. The office I belonged to (the office of the morgues and dissecting rooms) and the branch I had charge of (that of distributing the bodies among the different dissecting rooms) were not very enlivening, I grant you, and I sat all day in front of six green cardboard boxes bearing this inscription: "Distribution of corpses," which I had written on them in large, round hand with a reed. But then I knew my particular department thoroughly. I dispatched my business in a couple of hours and killed the rest of the time with the charades and riddles in The Monde Illustre. I had got to be very clever with them; I used to send my answer and then have the glory of reading my name in the paper, between "The Military Club of Terrgoumines" and "The Habitues of the Cafe de l'Europe at Pithiviers."

Then the time spent at the office was a sacrifice made for my daily bread. My real life began at 4 o'clock, when, after washing my hands and hanging up my old alpaca office coat, I sallied forth and walked away with an even measured tread toward the distant quarter where I lived, down the Boulevard des Invalides and the Boulevard Montparnasse.

On summer evenings especially it was delightful. The slanting sun rays, at the "most effective hour," as the painters say, gilded the old trees, those that were cut down in that horrible siege and replaced by stupid maples with an iron grating round their roots, like a door scraper. The trees we had then were good old elms, good old lime trees, good old chestnuts that had been slowly growing up there since the time of Louis XIV—dating back to the France of former days, when men were patient, when they liked things to be solid and lasting, when they took their time about planting a tree or founding an institution. How good it was to walk under their stout branches, under their thick foliage, that the sinking sun riddled through and through with warm sparks!

Before the railway station De l'Ouest there was a halt. The waiter used to keep a table for me next to the window on the first floor of the little restaurant, and there I ate my dinner slowly, watching the crowds pouring out from the trains from Versailles, the two artillerymen exactly alike, with the red plumes in their shakos, weighed down by their heavy trousers and holding up their sword scabbards in their hands; the pairs of lovers, very tired with their day's holiday, carrying great sheaves of wild flowers, and the old botanist, with his gray beard, in dusty gaiters and a straw hat, with his tin box swinging at his back. When the evening drew in I went and took my cup of coffee in the open air outside a cafe, and then, most nights, I went home.

Who lives in it now, I wonder, my sky parlor in the Rue d'Assas? Some Philistine, perhaps, who will have dishonored its walls by hanging them with chromo portraits of political men. In my time it was only a poor man's room, but it was furnished to my taste; it was the room of a dreamer, of a home bird, and every flower of the paper on its wall held the memory of a reverie. I had my flute there, my pipe, a thick carpet, a great arm chair with a sloping back, very comfortable to sit in before the fire reading and dreaming; on a shelf I had the books I know by heart, kindly skeptics, Montaigne and La Fontaine, and, for gentler moments, Dickens; and on each side of the looking glass my beautiful prints of the "Coucher de la Marie" and the "Hasard heureux de l'Escarpolette."

It was delicious to wake up there in the summer. I idled about the room in my shirt sleeves, smoking my first pipe, and watching the smoke fly off in a golden sun ray through my window, thrown wide open. I could see the green masses of the foliage in the Luxembourg, the domes of the Pantheon, and the Val-de-Grace, and the sky—a great deal of sky; the supple swallows passed backward and forward continually, quite close to me, with the little cry, "cuik," as if they were wishing me good morning. But the evenings were still more exquisite—the starry evenings, when, after I had read a few pages and played a little Mozart on my flute, I leaned out of my window before all the splendors of the zodiac, listening to such scraps of waltzes as the night wind bore me from Bullier.

Yes, I grant you, there was a lack of women in my life. And that was just what I was imprudent enough to confess to one of my companions at the office. (I ought to have mistrusted that fellow, a practical man who had learned shoemaking as an amusement for economy's sake, and who made his own shoes in the office in his leisure moments.) He said at once:

"I have just got what you want. Thirty thousand francs and expectations. Her mother always has her lips blue; she will die of heart disease."

I was not at all decided. I made objections. Bah! in a fortnight's time I was already compromised; I had accepted an invitation to dinner from the young lady's family.

The crumb brush did the rest.

It was at dessert. The dinner had been very pleasant, very cordial. The mamma seemed a very nice woman, although she did wear her husband's photograph set as a brooch; and though he was rather solemn, and had begun with the soup to talk of the conduct France should hold toward Russia, still the father did not displease me, with his Greek skull cap and his head like a white-bearded model, who sits for "Moses" and "God the Father." I had dined well, too well. The meat had evidently been roasted before a wood fire, and there was some very nice Burgundy, with a bouquet like violets. I began to expand at dessert—the stereotyped winter dessert in the middle class—a cake, some macaroons, a few wrinkled apples, oranges and hot chestnuts in a napkin. It was at that moment that the young lady, at a sign from her mother, took the basket and the yataghan-shaped brush and came round to each plate to brush away the crumbs.

You are not made of marble, are you? No more am I; and when this tall, dark maiden, with cheeks like an apple, bent over me to brush the cloth, intoxicating me with the delicious perfume of her hair, I said to myself (it was partly the fault of that Burgundy): "I will propose."

Well, and so I did; that is ten years ago now, and I was accepted; and I am the most miserable of men.

In the first place, as soon as I was married and a family man, I had to set to work in earnest. Good-by to the charades in The Monde Illustre. Now I had to plunge up to my neck in those revolting documents. I am working up the question of morgues. I am deep in the study of dissecting rooms. It sickens me; it disgusts me; but I have three children and I am only a clerk at 5,000 francs a year. With a view to showing myself off in the eyes of my superiors as a clever specialist and a man well up in his subject, I have published several pamphlets whose titles alone make me shudder.

"Morgues, as They Have Been, as They Are, and as They Ought to Be," in one volume oct.; or "On the Danger of Hasty Burials," pamph.; in 8; and at this very moment I am preparing a voluminous report on "Suburban Cemeteries, and the Carriage of Deceased Persons by Rail, as Much from the Point of View of Decency as of Public Hygiene." I, a flute player! I, who used to write sonnets!

That reminds me of my poor flute, my beautiful flute! It has not been out of its case this many a long day, nor my good meerschaum either. Music and reverie, they are all very well for poets and backelors!

They are far enough away, too, those pleasant saunterings after office hours. Now I have to hurry off by the tramway to the horrid quarters where my wife chooses to live, to be near her parents. There I live in a dreary entresol, with a low ceiling, and when I shave in the morning before the window I look out on the houses that are being pulled down, and further off in the distance I get a side view of a six-storied house with a great green devil painted on it, shaking out of a cornucopia the waistcoat, coat and trousers of a $4 suit.

It is not that I have any complaint to make of my wife; she is a good, worthy creature, except that she loves her children, not like a mother, but like a hen, and spoils them horribly. Only I shall never get used to her bad management (I ask you, is it bearable for a nervous man to be continually finding, as I do every day, children's damp shoes hanging on the fire-irons and pinafores drying on the guard), and I shall never be able to understand either why she will persist in keeping that servant with the port wine mark on her face, who takes away my appetite every time I look at her.

I could even bear with my mother-in-law, a poor little slave, terrified to death by the broad, black eyebrows and white beard of her old Neptune of a husband, whom she never addressed but in a manner calculated to combine respect with tenderness, as:

"Monsieur Dubu, will you pass me the mustard?" "Monsieur Dubu, will you have a little more soup?"

"It is he, Dubu, he, my father-in-law, who has poisoned my existence. He is a domestic tyrant, an odious bourgeoisie. Ceremonious and pretentious, he takes advantage of his austere and venerable appearance to give the weight of a sermon to his slightest words, and to inflict all his idiotic theories, that he gets second hand out of the papers, on me. That patriarchal head of his, which looks more like a bust cut out of soap, irritates me to such an extent with its expression of unbearable stupidity that when he talks of the encroachments of the clergy I long to enroll myself among the pilgrims to Lourdes, and when he boasts of the honorable conquests gained by the bourgeoisie, whom he always calls the aristocracy of labor, I feel inclined to array myself in a red sash and put myself at the head of a band of communards. Hard and close in all matters of business, he considers charity degrading to the poor, and would not give a penny to a beggar on the excuse that mendicants make themselves up with artificial infirmities, and that he himself was accosted one evening by a ragged wretch who was carrying a sham baby she had made out of a bundle of rags.

When I began housekeeping I was imprudent enough to trust my furnishing to this terrible man, who declared he could get everything much cheaper and better than I could do, and now I live in all the abomination of red velvet and mahogany, and my drawing room clock—O, my pretty cuckoo from the Black Forest, how gayly you used to chime out the hours of my liberty in my room in the Rue d'Assas. My drawing room clock is a hideous block of marble of the color of an Italian cheese. My beautiful prints from Bandouin and Fragonard have long since been exiled, as indecent, into the obscurity of a dark passage, and funereal pictures, after Delaroche, gifts of my father-in-law—Jane Grey before the block, with a weeping executioner, and Lord Strafford putting his hand through the bars of his prison—in gaudy frames, sadden the walls of my apartment.

Last year, on my wife's birthday, I was driven to break out into open revolt against M. Dubu, who threatened to adorn my dwelling with a most terrific scene from the Inquisition, with tribunal of monks, executioners in cowls, and a naked victim writhing on burning coals. My nights are not very good, as it is; if I have eaten anything a little unmanageable at dinner Jane Grey and Lord Strafford pursue me in nightmare, and I dream that I am obliged to cut off my wife's head, or that I am kneeling before a grating to kiss the hand my father-in-law holds out to me between the bars.

He took a cruel revenge, though, for my refusal. He has hung up in his daughter's room—in our nuptial chamber—an enlarged copy of his own photograph of himself, Dubu, invested with his Freemason's insignia.

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Such is my life! And all because I lost my head for a moment when Adelaide—my wife's name is Adelaide—swept off the crumbs of bread from the tablecloth; and, as if to awaken anew my ceaseless regret, every Sunday evening, when we have dined with my father-in-law, when the dessert is put on the table, and when I am dreaming, vaguely fascinated by my father-in-law's long white beard, of all the disagreeables of our journey home through the rainy night, of the heavy children I shall have to carry, of the interminable waiting in the omnibus stations, my wife gets up to sweep away the crumbs as she did formerly, and, thinking to awaken a tender remembrance, shows me the brush, with a smile, but that curved instrument only sets me sadly thinking of the last crescent of our honeymoon that set so long ago. —Francois Coppee.

Look After Your Scalp.

Many think that by cutting the hair short they increase its growth. But this is doubtful. Women rarely become bald; yet they never cut their hair as do men. May not their immunity from a shining pate be partly due to the fact that they do not patronize the barber, nor wear tight head-gear? If in early life our young men would look after their scalps, even while they do not appear to need attention, it might save them the trouble of looking after them in sorrow at a later period, when it will not do much good. If they do not the time will come when we shall have a race of human beings without hair.—Boston Budget.

There are now only three colleges—Yale, Amherst and Williams—which are not open to women in one way or another.

West Point "Plebes" Learning to Walk.

The young soldiers are in camp for the summer, and all of them except the poor wretches who have just entered are resplendent in white duck suits. The "plebes," alas! have to wear gray. And why, do you ask, are they wretched? If you were to see one you would understand. They are learning how to walk. Here come half a dozen of them, looking neither to the right nor left, shoulders back, head erect, arms held stiffly by their sides and the palms of their hands turned out, walking as if they had wooden legs! The most ungainly, awkward-looking beings imaginable.—West Point Cor. Boston Transcript.

In Europe eucalyptus has been found efficient in the treatment of asthma.

A LINEMAN'S LIFE.

ALWAYS AT WORK AND ALWAYS READY TO GO.

Mending Wires in a Thunderstorm—A Man Killed by Lightning Twenty Miles Away—Locating a Break—Beyond the Lineman's Control.

"Well, that's about the worst trip I ever had, Mr. Stephens," said Smith Bryce, the Western Union lineman, as he threw his kit of tools upon the floor.

"How's that, Smith?" asked Mr. Stephens, the Western Union manager.

"Oh, the lightning was bad. It was terrible. It beat anything I ever saw. It knocked my plyers out of my hands, and one time threw them fifty feet. It knocked me down twice, and made me dance a three-minute jig. it took my tools away from me and laughed at me when I made the second attempt to join the ends of the wire. I tell you I have been in many storms. I have spliced wires in the dark, with lightning running by so rapidly that I could not have seen the wires but for the bright current on them. I have been thrown from the top of a high pole, and I have been made hold my hands wide open by the current on the wire, despite my effort to shut them, but I never had such an experience as I had this morning just before day, four miles this side of Macon. The lightning played along the wires in streams and flashes; it rolled in balls, it jumped in lumps, it cut all kinds of funny tricks, and it resisted nearly every attempt I made to splice the broken places."

"You see," said Mr. Stephens, interrupting the lineman, "that the Macon wire was broken yesterday, and Smith went down the road to fix it, and when he reached the broken wire he was in a thunder storm and had some trouble fixing it."

"He didn't fix it while it was lightning!"

"Oh, yes; they don't mind a little lightning. It knocks them silly sometimes, and once in a while kills a man. But a lineman gets used to that sort o' thing, and finally plays with lightning as the bird with a snake that is charming it."

"Then a lineman's life is interesting?"

"It is. Now there's Smith. He has been here during twenty years, and during that time has had more electricity pass through him than would be necessary to tear Atlanta into splinters. Since he has been here two linemen have been seriously hurt and two have been killed. About four years ago we had one killed up the Air Line road a out twenty miles. You see, the wire was in two, and after we had located the trouble the lineman took a helper and went up. They found the broken wire and began splicing it, but while they were at work lightning struck the wire and killed the lineman and knocked his helper senseless. Why, the poor fellow was as black as could be. Then, since then, Smith went out on the State road with another lineman, and while they were at work lightning hit the wire and killed the lineman, and Smith came home badly used up. Why, just where the men were working that time it was as clear as crystal. There was not a cloud to be seen, and the lightning which killed the man was twenty miles away."

"TWENTY MILES AWAY!"

"Yes, twenty miles away. The men were working near Big Shanty, and way up above Cartersville a big storm was raging. The lightning struck the line and followed it for twenty miles, when it came to the end of the wire, which the lineman was holding in his hand, and killed him."

"Yes," said Smith. "I had hold of the wire, too. He had it at the end, and the shock passed over the wire through my hands before it reached him. Why, the instant I felt it my hands sprang wide open, and before I could look around the poor fellow was on the ground dead, and I was whirling like a whirlwind."

"Then a lineman's life is in danger?"

"Constantly. He is always at work and always ready to go. You see, we measure the telegraph wires by ohms—not inches, feet or miles. For instance, the wire from here to any point is so many ohms. Now, if we have any trouble in securing connection, say with Chattanooga or Macon, an operator goes to the instrument and tries the 'pressure.' If it shows half the number of ohms the wire is entitled to we know the wire is down, broken, or out of order half way to Chattanooga. The lineman is called up and told where the trouble is. He takes a dozen glass insulators, a coil of 100 feet of wire, a saw, hatchet, and other tools, and board the first train. Maybe he was just returned from a three or four days' trip, and is tired and hungry. This makes no difference. The wire must be fixed, and, without seeing his family, he jumps on the first train and goes. As he nears the place where the trouble is located, he pulls the bell cord, the train stops and he jumps off. It may be at the dead hour of night, or it may be at noon. It may be clear or it may be raining hard. It may be warm or it may be cold. It may be in an open field or it may be in the woods. These things the linemen can't control, and after he hits the ground he hunts the broken place, mends the wire and sits down on the cross tie until a train comes along. He don't care which way that train is going. He wants to get out of the woods, and, without ceremony, flags the train down and gets on."

"But don't the railroad company object?"

"Oh, no. You see we have a contract with all the railroads which allows us this right, and it is the secret of the Western Union's success."

"Do the linemen pay their fare?"

"No, they have annuals. Now, there's Smith—the only colored man in the south who has annuals over all the roads in Georgia—with a pocketful of annuals."—Atlanta Constitution.

Americans Meddling with the Weather.

It is not alone Guibollard—the present butt of the French wits—who thinks Columbus made a mistake in discovering America, since it is from this country that Europe gets its bad weather. The London correspondent of The Iron Age, speaking of the favorable crop prospects in England should the good weather continue another week or two, says: "That, however, is doubtful, seeing that the inevitable 'American storm' has been telegraphed, and is due with us two or three days hence. Your storm warnings are no doubt sent to us with the most beneficent intentions, but there are those who wish you would 'leave our weather alone.' I remember a year or two ago asking an old boatman on the beach at Yarmouth what he thought of the weather. He replied that he 'didn't knaw nawthin' 'bout it.' One time he used to be able to see a little ahead in respect of weather, but 'since them Americans had managed things he couldn't make nawthin' of it.'"—Chicago News.

The Lesson of the War.

"I know a woman," said an old physician, "who, in 1861, was as heartless as any girl in the country. In all the days of her young womanhood she had never been moved by a tender sentiment and had never shed a tear. She believed that she was to become a commonplace, prosaic, hard-hearted woman about whom novelists wrote so much. She looked upon herself as desicient in tenderness and sentiment and womanliness, but in the first year of the war I saw tears in her eyes over the simplest occupations that were in any way connected with the memory of the boys in front. In the second year of the war I saw her one of the most efficient of that body of noble women who risked everything to help the soldiers. In the third year of the war I saw her an impulsive, outspoken woman, to whose eyes the tears would come did you but mention a poor soldier's grievance. In the last year of the war we counted her among the most sympathetic, among the warmest hearted, and among the most emotional of all the women engaged in the work of relieving the soldiers."—Inter-Ocean "Curbstone Crayons."